USDA GLOBAL CHANGE FACT SHEET

USDA'S CLIMATE CHANGE ROLE

Our Commitment: Climate change is an extremely important issue for USDA. Agriculture and forestry are more sensitive to weather than other economic sectors. We are committed to understanding how global change affects agriculture and forestry and what we can do to mitigate greenhouse emissions from these sectors. We know we can address the global greenhouse gas issue and protect the environment while carefully considering the interests of American farmers, forest landowners, and ranchers. USDA involvement occurs at the highest levels down through research, program development, and implementation staff.

Coordination Office: The Global Change Program Office (located in USDA's Office of the Chief Economist) coordinates agricultural, rural and forestry issues related to global change. The Office serves as the focal point for coordinating activities with other Federal agencies, interacting with the legislative branch, and represents USDA on U.S. delegations to international climate change meetings. William Hohenstein is the point of contact in the Global Change Program Office.

Outreach: USDA is committed to working with Congress and with agriculture, forestry, and conservation groups on domestic and international policy options on abating greenhouse gas emissions and on sequestering carbon through forestry and agricultural activities. Our research staff frequently present technical work on carbon sinks and new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Our outreach goals are to clarify the science of climate change, understand the unique concerns of our constituents, and work together to find solutions to met U.S. greenhouse gas goals.

Activities: USDA-sponsored research continues to support long-term studies to improve our understanding of the roles that terrestrial systems play in influencing climate change and the potential effects of global change (including water balance, atmospheric deposition, vegetative quality, and UV-B radiation) on food, fiber, and forestry production in agricultural, forest, and range ecosystems. USDA's research program is strengthening efforts to determine the significance of terrestrial systems in the global carbon cycle, and to identify agricultural and forestry activities that can contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas concentrations. USDA's research agencies will support the Department in responding to the President's February 14, 2002, directive to develop accounting rules and guidelines for carbon sequestration projects. Contributions from the USDA's research program include the development of improved emission and sequestration coefficients, new tools for accurately measuring carbon and other greenhouse gases, and the development of improved methodologies.

We recognize there is significant potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agricultural sources and increase carbon sequestration on U.S. forest, range, and croplands. We are currently reviewing conservation programs to determine how effective they have been in helping farmers

abate greenhouse gas emissions and sequester carbon. We are also reviewing our research programs to be sure we are maintaining a strong research program on the many aspects of climate change that affect agriculture and enhance the capacity of our farm, forest and rangelands to sequester carbon.